

What is claimed is:

- 1 1. A method for use in a collaborative system comprising the steps of:
2 setting up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively communicate;
3 automatically collecting presence information of each of said participants in said
4 group; and
5 dynamically displaying a visual representation having a plurality of display
6 windows including at least said participants, said collected presence information, and a
7 set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said displayed presence
8 information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one or more others of
9 said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.
- 1 2. The method as defined in claim 1 further including a step of a participant of
2 said group employing said displayed presence information and at least one of said
3 mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said participants in
4 said group.
- 1 3. The method as defined in claim 1 wherein said prescribed mode of
2 communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.
- 1 4. The method as defined in claim 3 wherein said step of dynamically displaying
2 includes a step of automatically updating one or more of said plurality of display
3 windows.
- 1 5. The method as defined in claim 4 wherein said step of automatically collecting
2 presence information includes a step of automatically updating said presence information.
- 1 6. The method as defined in claim 5 wherein said presence information for a
2 participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of
3 predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.
- 1 7. The method as defined in claim 6 wherein said set of mechanisms includes at
2 least email, chat, voice call, or the like.
- 1 8. The method as defined in claim 6 further including a step of maintaining said
2 collected and updated presence information and a step of notifying said participants of
3 changes of status in said presence information for said participants in said group.

1 9. The method as defined in claim 8 wherein said step of dynamically displaying
2 further includes display windows for displaying at least documents and uniform resource
3 locators (URLs) to information to be discussed.

1 10. The method as defined in claim 9 wherein said set of mechanisms further
2 includes persistent chat and said step of initiating communication further includes
3 initiating a persistent chat session.

1 11. The method as defined in claim 10 wherein said step of initiating
2 communication further includes a step of setting up third party calls.

1 12. Apparatus for use in a collaborative system comprising:

2 means for setting up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively
3 communicate;

4 means for automatically collecting presence information of each of said
5 participants in said group; and

6 means for dynamically displaying a visual representation having a plurality of
7 display windows including at least said participants, said collected presence information,
8 and a set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said displayed
9 presence information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one or more
10 others of said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.

1 13. The invention as defined in claim 12 further including a means for allowing a
2 participant of said group to employ said displayed presence information and at least one
3 of said mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said
4 participants in said group.

1 14. The invention as defined in claim 12 wherein said prescribed mode of
2 communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.

1 15. The invention as defined in claim 14 wherein said means for dynamically
2 displaying includes means for automatically updating one or more of said plurality of
3 display windows.

1 16. The invention as defined in claim 15 wherein said means for automatically
2 collecting presence information includes means for automatically updating said presence
3 information.

1 17. The invention as defined in claim 16 wherein said presence information for a
2 participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of
3 predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.

1 18. The invention as defined in claim 17 wherein said set of mechanisms includes
2 at least email, chat, voice call, or the like.

1 19. Apparatus for use in a collaborative system comprising:

2 a call set up unit to set up a plurality of participants in a group to collaboratively
3 communicate;

4 a user agent unit to automatically collect presence information of each of said
5 participants in said group; and

6 a visual display unit to dynamically display a visual representation having a
7 plurality of display windows including at least said participants, said collected presence
8 information, and a set of mechanisms for a participant to use in conjunction with said
9 displayed presence information to initiate a prescribed mode of communicating with one
10 or more others of said participants in said group for a particular collaborative purpose.

1 20. The invention as defined in claim 19 further including a device to allow a
2 participant of said group to employ said displayed presence information and at least one
3 of said mechanisms to initiate communication with one or more of others of said
4 participants in said group.

1 21. The invention as defined in claim 19 wherein said prescribed mode of
2 communicating includes at least either an asynchronous mode or a synchronous mode.

1 22. The invention as defined in claim 21 wherein said visual display unit
2 automatically updates one or more of said plurality of display windows.

1 23. The invention as defined in claim 22 wherein said user agent unit
2 automatically updates said presence information.

1 24. The invention as defined in claim 23 wherein said presence information for a
2 participant represents prescribed activities of said participant regarding one or more of
3 predetermined instrumentalities and/or actions.

1 25. The invention as defined in claim 24 wherein said set of mechanisms includes
2 at least email, chat, voice call, or the like.

1 26. The invention as defined in claim 24 wherein said user agent unit further
2 maintains said collected and updated presence information and notifies said participants
3 of changes of status in said presence information for said participants in said group.

1 27. The invention as defined in claim 26 wherein said visual display displaying
2 further displays windows to display at least documents and uniform resource locators
3 (URLs) to information to be discussed.

1 28. The invention as defined in claim 27 wherein said set of mechanisms further
2 includes persistent chat and said set up unit further includes setting up a persistent chat
3 session.

1 29. The invention as defined in claim 28 wherein said set up unit further sets up
2 third party calls.